Memories of a childhood on the East Marsh in Edwardian Grimsby from around 1905 by John Charles Lyon

(1901 – 1993)

Memories of a childhood on the East Marsh

Edwardian Grimsby from around 1905, based on notes created by John Charles Lyon

(28 August 1901 – 1993)

Introduction

John Lyon (also known as **Charles** or **Chas.**) left a series of **notes** to his friend, **Christine (Chris) Brace**, in which he recorded his **early recollections** of the **East Marsh in Grimsby** from around **1905 onwards**. Together, these **writings** provide a **valuable glimpse** into **life in early Edwardian Grimsby**.

Some years ago, **Christine** published a **booklet** entitled *Memories*, which is **reproduced here with her permission**. She has also kindly allowed the inclusion of additional **ephemera from John's life**. Beyond the material in **Christine's original booklet**, I have incorporated further **extracts from John's notes** (with the occasional **repetition of a sentence or two**) and interspersed the pages with **supplementary photographs** and **contextual information** to help build a **fuller picture** of his **experiences** and the **era**.

If you are aware of any **errors**, or further **details** that might contribute to a more **complete profile** of **John's life**, or of **Edwardian life on the East Marsh**, please do not hesitate to **get in touch**.

Credit for images and information is given where known.

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Dave Smith – October 2025.

Please click here to make contact or type *https://forms.gle/Az67hvbEsb2qnTiYA* into your browser.

The Lyon Family

John and Marjorie

Photo: John Lyon and his wife, Marjorie (nee Henrickson)

William Lyon - The Bootmaker

Photo: John’s father, William Lyon

Photo: Receipt for 'stock and movable features' – the sum of £106 (£11,300 equivalent in 2025) was paid on 31 March 1900 by William Lyon to purchase the boot store business.

There is no mention of the building being transferred as it was probably leased.

Photo: Albion Street, Grimsby, in the early 1950s - some of these buildings were likely still standing when the Lyon family had their business there.

Albion Street – "One of Grimsby's Money Boxes"

John's family boot and clog making business stood close to the **docks**, on **Albion Street in Grimsby**. He remembered it as *"a narrow, scruffy street, but one of Grimsby's money boxes."* The **East Marsh Drain** ran directly behind the shop, bringing with it a constant **battle against rats**.

For many **locals**, the area is still recalled through its **sounds** as much as its **sights** — the sharp, rhythmic **clatter of wooden clogs** striking the **cobbled streets** as **dock workers** streamed to and from the **fish docks**, a **soundtrack to daily life** on the **East Marsh**.

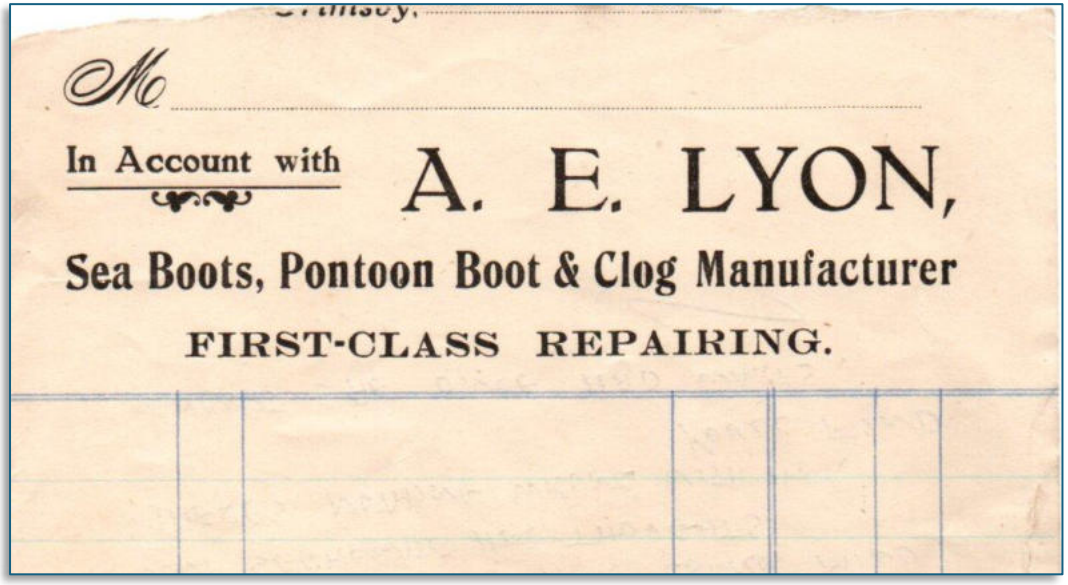
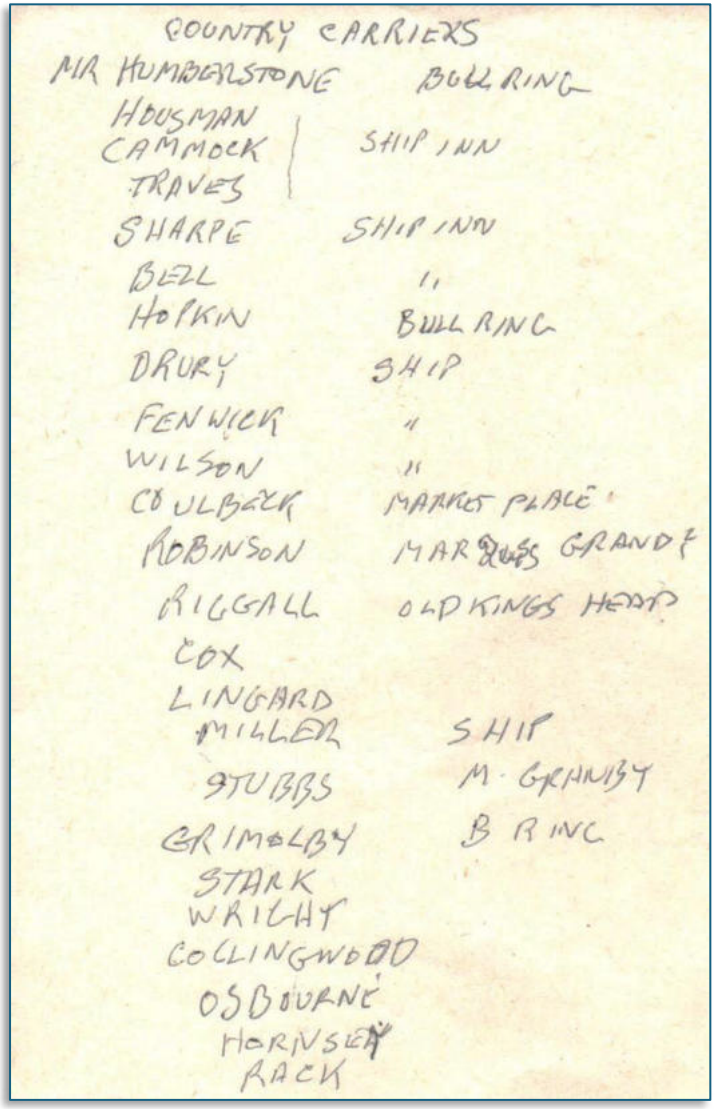

Mr
In Account with A. E. LYON,
Sea Boots, Pontoon Boot & Clog Manufacturer
FIRST-CLASS REPAIRING.

Photo: I am unsure as to why the name on the above document shows A.E. Lyon when his father was named William Lyon.

Photo: The East Marsh Drain - A somewhat rodent free wistful painting of the East Marsh Drain c.1886 looking from Bridge St area towards Holme Hill at Wellington Street. William Lyon's boot store backed on to the watercourse.

(Credit: Lincs Inspire Grimsby Local History Library)

Village Carriers – Among John's notes is a list of country carriers who served Grimsby and the surrounding area



Prior to **motor vehicles**, **carters** would drive their **horse-drawn delivery cart** in and out of **Grimsby** (many via **'Cartergate'**) and other areas, on **set days**, often coinciding with **market days**. **Carters** provided a **vital transport link** between **rural villages** and **market towns** such as **Grimsby**, and their **schedule** was an **essential list** for local businesses, much like the **'Yellow Pages Directory'** was in the **pre-internet days**.

Footwear requiring repair would probably be received not just from the **docks** but also **rural Lincolnshire**. Once **repaired**, they would need to be taken within a **set time slot** to the carriers' **'stand' or 'station'**, which was sometimes by a **public house**, or if not, the **Market Place** or **Bull Ring**, ready to be **returned to the customer**.

Sometimes, the **raw materials** essential for **boot repairs** and **clog making** may have been **sent to Grimsby** for **John's family business** by **carters**. **Carters** would use **public houses** for their **'stands'** as they provided **stabling for their horse**, they could **take refreshment** and often serve as a **social hub** for **rural customers**.

Photo: The various carrier's 'stands' - John lists them as the Bull Ring, Market Place, Ship Inn (may refer to the 'Ship Hotel' on Flottergate), Marquis of Granby and the Old King's Head. All in the vicinity of the Market Place.

Photo: Carters wagons on their 'stand' in Grimsby's Bull Ring adjacent to the market c.1908. The horses are enjoying a well-earned rest in stables behind a nearby hostelry whilst the carter may be enjoying a well-earned pint in its bar leaving young lads to load the wagon. This area today is occupied by St. James Square and the now empty former Wilko Store. Note what appears to be an ice cream seller in his white coat in the lower right of the picture.

Photo: Cartergate – Grimsby's ancient wagonway - for generations, it has echoed with the sound of the hooves and cartwheels of merchants and carters entering and leaving the centre of the town.

A Boy at Work: Jobs from Age Thirteen - John began his working life remarkably early

📜 John Lyon's Early Path

🛠 Work & Apprenticeships

- **Aug 1915** – Left school
- **1915** – *Blue Stamp Trading Co.* (until Oct)
- **1915** – *Gooseman's Chemist, Cleethorpe Road*
- **Early 1916** – *Cash Clothing Co. Cleethorpe Road*
- **1916** – *Glenton's Bakery, Freeman Street (until June) → farmers boy for Mumby of 'Click 'em in', Swinhope (June–Oct)*
- **Late 1916–Early 1917** – *Grimsby News printers then Richardson's Printers who purchased the print side.*
- **1917** – Apprentice at *Electricity Works* (fortnight only as I disliked it)
- **1917** – Short stints: *Pratt Gardener*; *Mr Blount, butcher* (one week)
- **Aug–Sept 1917** – *Meadows Coach Builder and Blacksmith, Clayton Street*
- **Sept 1917 onwards** – Apprenticed to *Mr Willey, Jeweller* → served **five years**

🎖 Cadet Service (1917–1919)

- Joined cadets, promoted to **Corporal**
- Member of **rifle team** → 4th highest score in Cadet Cup
- Competed in **King's Cup** → team placed **third**
- Attended **Brocklesby Camp** twice
- Learned to **swim** while serving
- Left at the end of the war

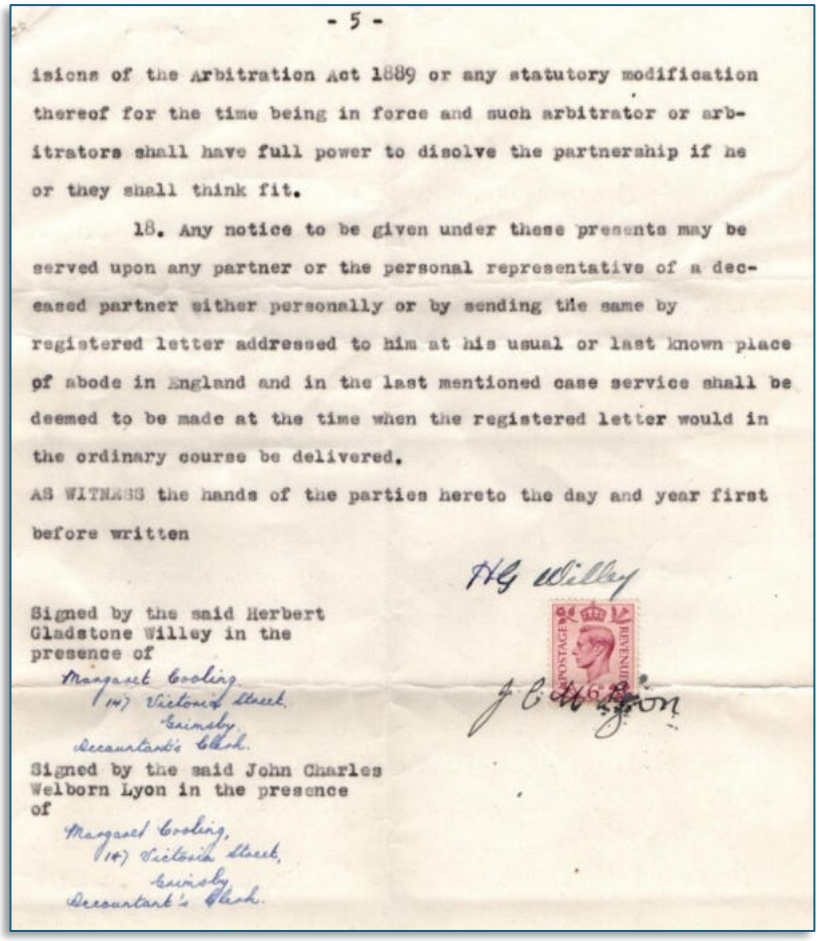
🎶 Music & Performance

- **May 1919–May 1920** – Singing lessons with *Mr Owens*
- **16 June 1919** – First public performance at **Grimsby Town Hall**
- **Sept 1919–Mar 1920** – Formed and ran a **Concert Party**
- **1922–1923** – Violin lessons with *Miss Arthur*

From Apprentice to Partner

The **contract**, bearing the **seal of a King George VI stamp**, suggests it was signed sometime between **1936 and 1952**. Yet a **1960 trade directory** lists only **Mr Willey**, while the next available edition, in **1970**, records them as **partners**.

From the age of **fifteen**, when he first began **working for Herbert Willey**, **John** steadily **learned the jeweller's trade** and, in time, **entered into partnership** with him.



- 5 -

isions of the Arbitration Act 1889 or any statutory modification thereof for the time being in force and such arbitrator or arbitrators shall have full power to dissolve the partnership if he or they shall think fit.

18. Any notice to be given under these presents may be served upon any partner or the personal representative of a deceased partner either personally or by sending the same by registered letter addressed to him at his usual or last known place of abode in England and in the last mentioned case service shall be deemed to be made at the time when the registered letter would in the ordinary course be delivered.

AS WITNESS the hands of the parties hereto the day and year first before written

HG Willey

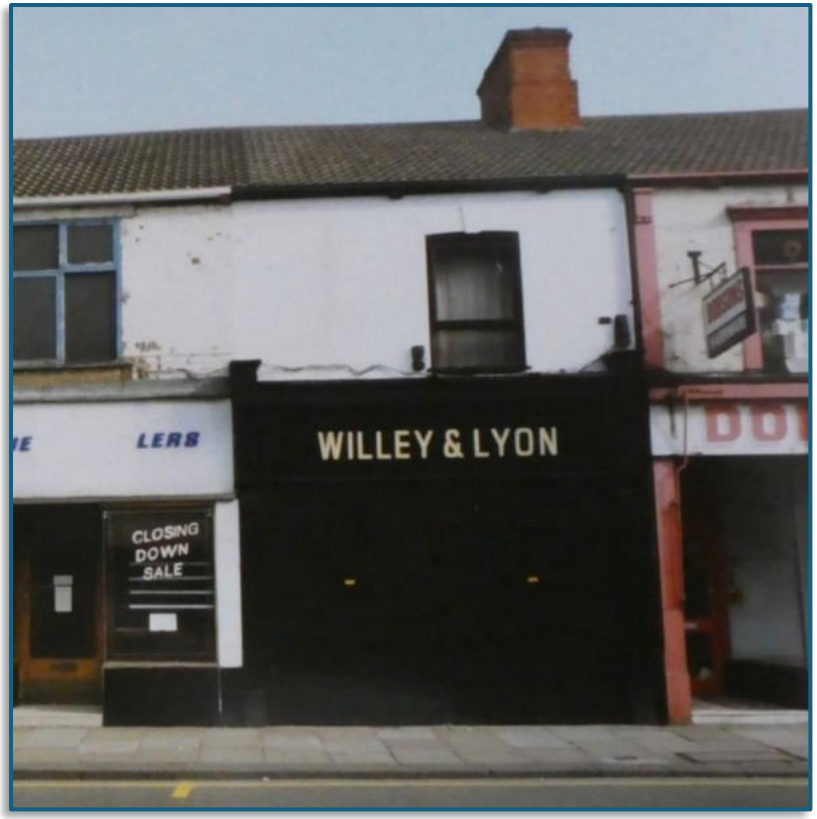
Signed by the said Herbert Gladstone Willey in the presence of

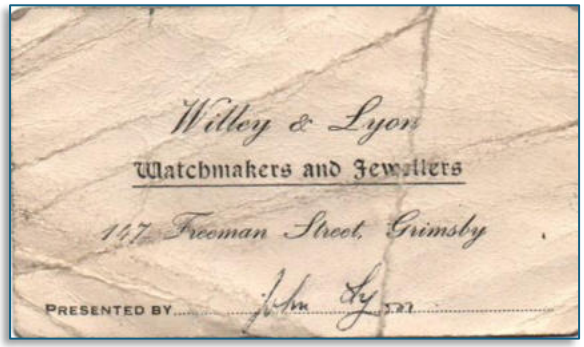
Margaret Cooling
14) Victoria Street
Grimsby
Accountant's Clerk.

Signed by the said John Charles Welborn Lyon in the presence of

Margaret Cooling,
14) Victoria Street,
Grimsby
Accountant's Clerk.

Photo: Partners - this is the only surviving document of what was likely a partnership contract between John Lyon and Herbert Willey.





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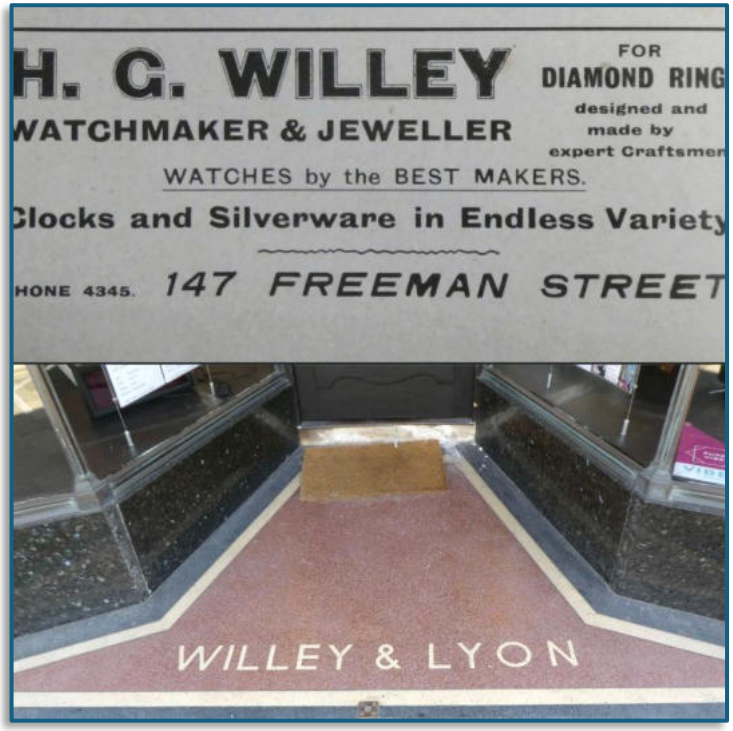
John and Herbert's jewellery business-

Willey & Lyon at 147 Freeman Street, Grimsby.

(Credit: Lincs Inspire Grimsby Local History Library)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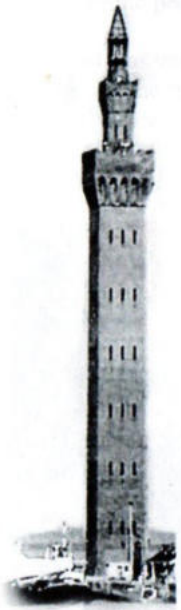
MEMORIES



"FREEMO"

In the early 1900s.

John Lyon

FOREWORD

JOHN CHARLES WELBOURN LYON

In 1901 my friend and neighbour, John Lyon, son of a bootmaker, was born in Albert Street, Grimsby. His memories of a happy childhood reveal aspects of life in Grimsby that few can now remember. The whole of his life was enmeshed in the bustle of Freeman Street. His jeweller's shop is still there, trading as Willey and Lyon. He loved the people, the joys, and the noise of it all.

The past was very important to him. The present was to be lived to the full, and the future held no fear. He died peacefully in 1993.

Chris Brace

EDITOR'S NOTE

After Mr. Lyon's death his only daughter, Joan, felt that his reminiscences should be brought to a wider audience. Unhappily she died in 1999.

At this point, Chris Brace, a member of U3A, received the "memories" and thought that other U3A members would find them interesting and amusing.
The first two stories were edited by Carole Petchey and included in the U3A Brochure, which is given free to members.

I took over producing the brochure, and after editing and including further stories, found them so enjoyable and informative that I decided to edit many more and create a separate complete booklet of Mr.Lyon's writings. This was with the agreement and co-operation of Chris.

June Croft

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank Jenny Mooney, Head Librarian of the Grimsby Central Library, for her advice and support in enabling us to publish this booklet.

Chris Brace and June Croft

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Grimsby's East Marsh District - 1908: The Heart of John's Memories

Tents
Theatre
Chapel
Sun Sch
FREEMAN STREET MARKET
Church
Hall
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Mr LYON'S REMINISCENCES

ALBERT STREET and THE MARKET

My father, William Lyon, purchased the Albert Street Boot Store in 1900 for £100.

The new Century was just one year old when, in the front bedroom, a baby boy was announcing his birth. There was little promise of a happy year—Grimsby was in the throes of a Docks 'Lock-Out', and the area was on the poverty line. What a time to be born ! Fortunately, my food was free, but the rest of the family had little. Day followed day without a tinkle of the shop door bell. Father must have been at his wits end without money in the till. There was no unemployment benefit, no Social Security, no NHS, so a man without work was a man without money and consequently, no food. What food came into the house came on a trading basis. Father would sole and heel the butcher's boots and we had meat, or Lashbrookes our next-door baker would exchange a loaf for repairs to the family's footwear.

However, this is where I spent a very happy, carefree, childhood. Some of my memories are still vivid, and I hope anyone who reads this will enjoy my reminiscences.

When the lock-out dispute was settled, the Town began to recover. Father's business picked up and all was well in my world.

The early part of my life was woven around Freeman Street Market. Every Friday I received a penny from my father and a ha'penny from mother. I was rich. The only place to go was the Market, that was my goal every Saturday. It was just a short step away from the shop and the very fulfilment of any boy's prayer !

First, there were roundabouts—many a free ride on the platform until the attendant sent you sprawling off. There was the swings of course but you couldn't do anything about that unless you paid, but I did sometimes get a little go free if a customer wanted a partner.

Then there were the quacks—nobody looking at the Freeman Street Market today could picture what it was like in those far-off days. There were quack doctors, quack dentists, quack bone-setters, quack opticians and toffee makers. What a glorious smell as the toffee mixture was melted in a great stew-pan over a paraffin burner. All the stalls had paraffin lamps both for heat in the winter as well as light. Paraffin lamps give such a lovely soft glow over everything. The quack dentist who had a wagonette for his stall used to fascinate me the most—a fearful array of pliers and nippers, etc., hung round the front and inside the wagonette was a small table and a chair. The table had a basin of water and a towel and the chair was for his victim. The dentist usually wore a top hat and he would keep wiping his hands on the towel and holding up one or other of his tools. But he never once took a tooth out. When he'd got somebody who had or might have ! Toothache, he went into a great lot of preparation talking all the time about the dangers of bad teeth. He'd wash his hands; ask the victim to open his mouth, pick up the fiercest looking pair of pliers and looking round at the large crowd that had now gathered (expecting to see blood) he'd suddenly produce a small bottle of mixture and say this wonderful medicine would cure toothache better than he could. More gab and his assistant would hand out the bottles at 1/- a time.

The quack dentist had a very thin time when a real extractor made one of his visits. His name was Farquah and he had a tent with a three piece band playing outside. Now this chap really did pull teeth out and when the band played the loudest, that was the moment of agony. My father had a tooth extracted once by Farquah and he said "never again." It cost him a 1/-, same price as the quack's medicine but more effective !

SATURDAY on FREEMAN STREET MARKET

My early life was woven into the trappings and glory of the Saturday market. We waited all week for this day, and when at last it arrived we were helping and hindering the stall-holders. First there was a procession of hand-carts and traps, many country carts, and innumerable walkers, staggering under boxes and battered suitcases containing enough saleable goods, the proceeds of which must last them until next market day. Many did not get a stall at all. They would lay out their wares on newspaper or boxes in a circle. Some were like the tipster, who would simply hold his trade in a bag. The tipster, dressed as a jockey, would offer sealed envelopes containing a certain winner. I don't know how much he asked because I was much more interested in the patter of the quacks.

Sol Hoskins was my favourite, and I'd stand by his wagonette waiting for him to start his patter. He was dressed in a frock coat which immediately commanded respect. His line was herbs and he had something in a bottle, or a pill, that would cure anything. He was a wonderful speaker.

Old Sol put up for the council once. He hired a wagonette and filled it with us children, then off round the ward we drove waving sticks and shouting "Vote for Sol Hoskins." When we got back to Freeman Street he gave us all a currant bun. He was my friend for life.

Poor old Sol came on hard times, and when I was much older I had another contact with him. My uncle Anson was a shoe repairer who had a little shop facing Sol's house and Sol was a regular customer. One day he came in and asked my uncle if he would accept a *French bayonet* in lieu of payment. As it was that or nothing, the bayonet went on the shelf beside the repairs!

Grimsby had its full quota of street vendors in those pre-First World War days. One that I saw many times was an old gypsy woman wrapped in colourful clothing and wearing huge brass earrings. She used to push a converted pram which contained a parrot and an open divided box. In the box were numerous cards. half postcard size, and upon giving the gypsy a coin (I never knew how much) she would command the bird to choose a card. It made a stab in the box and then the card was yours, with a forecast of your future, good or bad.

Another pram –pusher was the hot chestnut man, a winter trade only as in the summer he sold hokey pokey from a three wheeled box. Hokey pokey was a flavoured ice cream wrapped in white paper (no biscuits). It only cost a half-penny for two pieces, but ice cream was much better. The Italian ice cream man would offer a huge cornet with red and white ice cream, or you could take a cup and have it filled for a penny.

Back home in Albert Street, once a week we had a visit from the creed wheat man. He toured the streets with a large can on his shoulder (my father supplied the leather shoulder pad) and a measure was hooked on the side. A penny a pint it was and my mother always got a basinful. Creed wheat pudding was the most delightful meal of the week. I can still savour its sweet milky taste to this day.

The organ-grinder came round Albert Street twice a day. While he turned the handle making lots of jolly music, a coloured picture panorama revolved behind a window set in the upper part of the organ. We saw the Boer War being fought all over again. Though we had music twice daily, the organ grinder only came into the shop once a week for a penny. Once my father refused to pay up as trade had been very bad, and we didn't get any music outside the shop for a long time after that.

I had a very happy, carefree childhood. The memories have remained vivid all my life.

Photo: The Sounds of Freeman Street, 1905 –

Among the bustle of the market, John remembered the organ-grinder who may stand here in the foreground.

FREEMAN STREET

The first time I was sent to Freeman Street was to Altham's the grocers near Riby Square who specialized in every brand of tea. But it wasn't to buy tea– it was to purchase a railway ticket for Hull! For some reason I never knew, you could buy cheap day returns there but only for Hull. The date stamping machine was fixed to the counter next to a display of dishes of tea. The cost of the ticket was 1/-(5p).

On the other side of the road was another grocers "Burgons" on Kent Street corner (they are still in business just off the main street). Here I would be sent at Xmas time for one of their special Xmas parcels containing ingredients for a Christmas cake: dried fruits and a bag of sugar. Also, as a bonus, a linen tape measure and a pencil—all for 1/-.

In those days there were still some cottages occupied by fishermen, though these were gradually being converted into shops. Freeman Street was a very much alive shopping centre then and it was a long time before I saw an empty shop. Many names of shopkeepers spring to mind. Mr Glenton, a retired skipper, opened a shop (still there) and his wife baked bread and cakes in a small oven – such as any housewife had. Once I helped out at this shop after Mr. Gartside had taken over, and was shown the oven that was the seed of the tree. I was the bakers boy for a short time, though a large bakers oven had been installed in a new building back way by then. I started work at 6.30 in the morning and left at 5.30pm. I was 15.

Poor old Freeman Street. In my memory it has been praised, battered, abused, thanked, buried and is now awaiting resurrection. I can remember it had 7 pubs, one fine church, two chapels, the best theatre in Lincolnshire and the biggest open market this side of the Humber. The street in those days was not properly made up and in wet weather you had to avoid getting mud-splashed. When I went apprenticed to a jewellers my unending task was washing windows which were constantly mud splattered. And then there came the great day of **RESURFACING!** A gang of navvies went the full length of Freeman Street on their knees laying a fine solid surface, and then we had a red star week. All the shops had flags and bunting was strung from building to building, bands played, prizes were given out. A Fancy Dress Parade was preceded by a procession of Councillors and other dignitaries, headed by the Mayor walking behind (for some reason!) a **goose**.

Freeman Street was a grand street then. Lots of shoppers, crowds of window gazers and everybody happy. Customers used to come in to buy on their way to the pictures or theatre and pick up their parcels after leaving the second house. There were plenty of horse drawn vehicles and it was lovely to hear the "clippetty clop". The trams made the most clatter, and when I was working at the bench I always knew when a tram came past.

The street scene in the early part of the century was mostly different to what it is now. There were more horse and carts than motor cars, and the result was a street littered with horse droppings! We boys collected them in a bucket with the aid of mother's brush and shovel, and took it down to the Carr Lane allotments and sold it for a penny a bucket.

My earliest memory of the street was seeing what must have been the last of the performing bears. It was a huge brown bear and had a ring through its nose and a chain and was led by a small Italian chap. It did a sort of dance on its hind legs while the keeper played a tune on a penny whistle.

Another visitor in the streets was the German band, which umpah-pahed round the town followed by us boys. When they had collected enough money for a drink they disappeared into the nearest **pub**.

Photo: c1912 Freeman Street at Wood Street, looking towards Hainton Square –

John remembered the clatter of the trams as they rattled by the shop

MORE STREET VENDORS

In the early part of the century the street had a great number of vendors hawking their wares. Apart from the creed wheat man there was the "Skimmed Milk Man". His truck was a large wooden box on a pair of pram wheels, and in the box a full size milk churn. He did a good trade in the poorer parts of the town, as skimmed milk was half the price of the real stuff.

Another trader, long disappeared, was the paraffin man. He too had a wheeled truck containing a large square tank of paraffin. Many houses were still lit with oil lamps, and the seller always had customers answering his call "Paraffin, paraffin."

There was one pavement artist who had his pitch outside the Gloucester Arms at the corner of Bridge Street and Albert Street. He had his paintings spread along the pub wall with a card saying "Wife and children to support." When he got enough coppers he would disappear inside for refreshment. I think the wife and children he was supporting belonged to the publican!

The tinker would repair a hole in your kettle while you waited; the chair mender sat on the pavement repairing cane backed chairs; the knife grinder sharpened your knives. The match seller was an all-seasons trader. His clothes were the most patched of all the street sellers, yet he was always whistling, and very polite. In the winter I think he got more pennies as gifts than for matches.

In those days if you were poor you remained poor. There were no handouts except the old age pension. My grandma was among the first recipients of this bounty. I still have the notice granting her the weekly sum of 5 shillings.

THE ALBERT STREET RAT

At the back of the Fish Houses in Albion Street was an open drain that provided home to dozens of rats. Dad's shop in Albert Street was only a few yards from the drain –as rats run- and he used to set a rat trap in the garden. He caught quite a number of them. One morning I went to see if we had caught one and found a horrible sight. The trap contained a rat's hind leg. The poor thing had bitten its leg off to escape.

Dad had a workshop in the garden with a wooden floor. One day he noticed a hole on each side going under the floor, and suspected a rat had made its nest there. He asked his neighbour to bring his dog (a real ratter), and got a large bucket of water ready to flush down one hole, while several helpers with sticks stood round the other hole. Mother had a yard brush ready and I was clutching a fire shovel.

Down the water went, and out popped a couple of rats. The dog went for one, and the other dashed round and round in a panic. Finally it managed to squeeze half its body under the door of the outside toilet.

The most fearful shriek of terror came from the inside. My elder sister was inside having hysterics, looking at half a snarling rat wedged under the door. Mother was belting the other half with a broom, and eventually won the battle. The rat lay still. We pulled open the door and there was my sister, standing on the toilet seat, white faced and trembling with her knickers round her ankles!

Poor lass; she was a long time getting over that!

Photo: The Gloucester Arms – “One of the Longest Bars in the Country”

Built in 1868 for William Butt, this landmark corner pub stood at Bridge Street and Albert Street until its closure around 1960, following compulsory purchase by the Borough Council.

(Credit: Photograph and information – Lincs Inspire Grimsby Local History Library)

THE ALBERT STREET BOOT STORE.

My father's contribution to the needs of Grimsby's fishing industry was in the form of Sea Boots. He must have made hundreds of pairs in his time. He used to work for the Steam Trawling Company on Fish Dock Road, but he also made sea boots at home in the garden workshop while mother minded the shop in Albert Street.

Our house always had the sweet smell of leather, from various hides hung in lines across the kitchen. When father had fashioned a pair of boots from one of the hides they stood in buckets of water all night to make sure they were watertight. I think they cost three or four pounds a pair, which was a lot of money in those days, but the boots would last a fisherman all of his working life and then fetch a good price second hand.

Sea boots were made to come well up the thigh and also cost many a deckie his life if he was unlucky enough to be washed overboard. They were so heavy, and more so when filled with water. Fishermen would struggle in the water trying to kick the sodden boots off.

Most of dad's customers were in a Boot Club, paying so much a week, but if a chap had a bad trip then payment would be missed. During the great Lock-Out the local pawnbroker had so many boots in pawn that he stopped taking them in. Many boots that father had made to order were never collected, and his trade was very badly affected during this distressing time.

Once in those hard up times, a woman snatched a pair of children's boots from the shop doorway (we used to have them hanging on a row of hooks). She raced down Albert Street with my father in hot pursuit, and me a long way behind – I only had short legs then! Down Freeman Street we went, down Newmarket Street, up the bridge, and father finally caught her half way across.

We all trooped back to the shop. The poor woman cried so much and I cried and father was winded. Mother said "Poor thing," meaning the woman, not father, and such a tale of poverty was told that my father let the woman go, with the boots properly wrapped up too.

Father's Boot Store recovered after the Lock Out, but the thing that put paid to his trade was the advent of Rubber Sea Boots. Mr Dunlop became a household name –

BUT NOT IN OUR HOUSE!

Photo: From Playground to Memory: Holme Hill School - An 1876 view of Holme Hill School on Heneage Road, captured around thirty-one years before John first walked through its doors. Within these walls he began his formal education, surrounded by the sights and sounds of Edwardian Grimsby.

Photo: Holme Hill Board School, 1898 - Seven years before John's time here, these teachers pose proudly for the camera. Which of them would go on to guide his first steps in learning?

Photo: John's name has been pencilled on the reverse of this photograph — a clue that he is almost certainly among those pictured.

ALBION STREET

Albion Street is one of my earliest memories -- Snowdens' Sawmill; Grays' Mill; Grit Mill; a slaughter house; fish houses.

Outside the Grit Mill were huge piles of sea shells, oyster, cockle, mussel etc. Workmen shoveled them into a grinding machine, producing fine grit for poultry farmers.

The smell from the slaughter house was awful. Many a time as I was going to Holme Hill school have I sought safety diving down a passage to avoid meeting cattle being driven to slaughter. The beasts used to wander down the path as well as the road.

There was always some excitement near the fish houses. In the herring season , every fish house had its quota of lassies (from Scotland} waiting for carts bringing fish from the docks, to be cured or smoked.. The lassies would stand at the fish house gates, knitting away, making stockings, pullovers, scarves and the like, until the fish carts were sighted. Knitting needles disappeared and then a sort of War Cry rang out and gutting knives were soon flashing over the fish, making them ready to be turned into kippers. I was often late for school, being fascinated by their dexterity.

Sometimes at night a fish house with its smouldering oak shavings would catch fire, and then there would be pandemonium. It was usually the roof beams that caught alight, and nothing could be done until the arrival of the fire brigade. That was one of my richest memories — to see the fire engine being raced along by two straining horses, sweating and snorting (they had galloped from Town Hall Square) the fire bell clanging — smoke pouring out of the boiler and the whole scene lit up with flames from the burning building. Nothing in my childhood memories can compare with that sight.

APPRENTICES

In 1911 I was 11 years old. My father sent me to deliver a pair of boots he had repaired to the home for apprentices in Humber Street. The boots were very heavy hanging over my shoulder, and nearly reached the ground. They were for an apprentice who was sailing on the next tide.

It was winter time and the room I was shown into was very cold. It was a large bleak room. In the centre was a round cast-iron stove with a small fire. There were a dozen or so lads standing around it, trying to keep warm. The clothes they wore were very tatty, and the one who claimed the sea boots had long grown out of his jacket and trousers.

Although I was only young, I did not know such poverty existed, and that scene burnt itself on my mind. The lads were all thin and had a frightened look about them that scared me. I feared I should be grabbed and my warm overcoat taken from me, and was pleased to hand over the boots and get away.

I know of the great work **Thomas Campbell** did for fishermen's orphans. He was instrumental in the building of an orphanage in Victor Street. I believe this was the first attempt at showing the destitute lads some love and care.

The Drama of the Kipper Fires – the excitement of a young boy

Round the corner from my **father's shop in Albert Street** was a row of **fish houses** where the **herring** went in as such and came out as **kippers**. The process of **curing the fish** involved a continuous **smouldering of oak chips** and sometimes, the **heat** would start the **roof timbers burning**. Then all the **commotion in the world** would be let loose. There would be a **bucket chain of sloshing water** – more water going on the **helpers** than on the **fire**.

The **fire buzzer** would be **wailing** and lots and lots of **people** would come **crowding into Albion Street**. About the time **flames were coming through the roof**, we'd hear the **fire bell**, and what a **magnificent sight** as the **fire engine**, pulled by **two sweating horses**, came **hell for leather down the street**. **Bell clanging, firemen shouting** – the old **boiler on the back** blowing a **full head of steam**.

What a **picture** to impress on any **young boy's mind**. I can see it now nearly **sixty years later**: the **gleaming brasswork**, the **two-wheeled ladder**, **miles of hosepipe**, the **steam rising from the horses**, and the **bustling firemen** in their heavy **chainstrap helmets**.

I really **enjoyed the fish house fires**. But I never saw the **rats running out**. I was told the **first sign of a fire** sent the **rats scampering**.

Photos: The Borough of Grimsby Fire Brigade's fire engine – the station was to the left of the Town Hall. (Below) a Grimsby fish house.

(Credit: Ged Richardson)

Photo: Industry and homes cheek by jowl: Cooper Snowden's sawmill, corner of Wellington Street and Albion Street – diagonally opposite Holme School John's Hill

Photo: The Herring Lassies: A Life on the Move

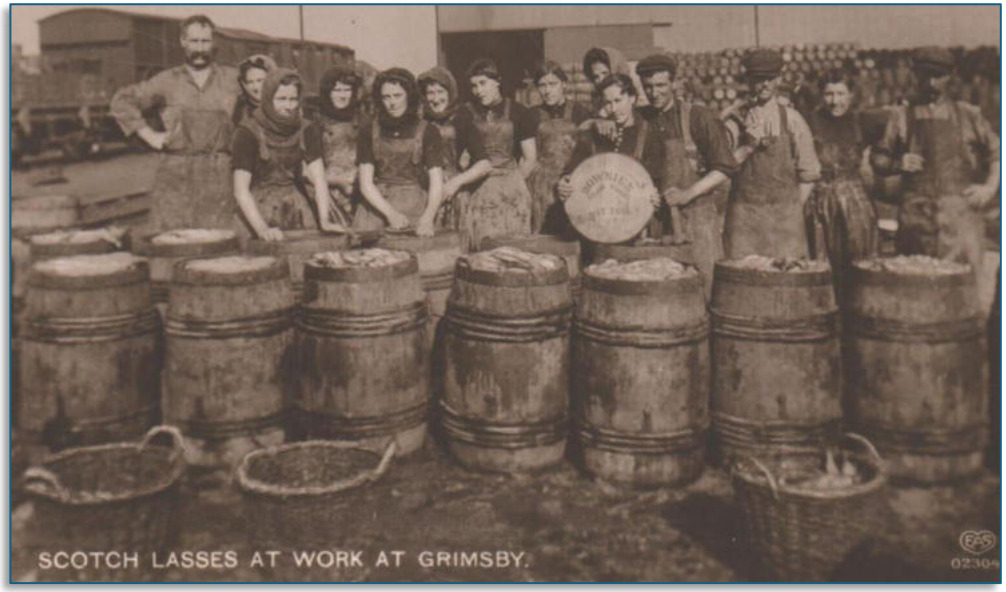
This fascinating **snapshot, taken around 1914**, captures the ever-industrious **Scottish 'herring lassies'** pausing in their **gruelling work** as they **await the next catch**. Notice how some of the **women** have **turned away from the camera** — a **poignant detail** rooted in the deep **superstitions of fishing communities**. Across **Scotland and East Anglia**, many believed **being photographed** was an act of **bad luck** that could **endanger their menfolk at sea**.

These **women** were the **vital, mobile workforce** of the **herring industry**. Their job was **relentlessly physical**: the arduous **gutting, salting, and packing of fish into barrels**. They would often seek the **temporary relief of knitting** during the **down moments**.

Starting in **May**, these **lassies** would **follow the herring shoals' seasonal migration**, travelling from the **north of Scotland** and trekking all the way down the **east coast of England**. They were **essential** to the entire process, ensuring that the **fresh catches of the herring fleet** were rapidly **cured and packed for export across Europe**.

Though **girls as young as fifteen** embarked on this **long, hard trek south**, the job offered them a **rare prize**: a remarkable degree of **financial independence**. Despite the **hardship** of their **nomadic lives**, many became the **main earners** in their families, **sending their wages home** to support their **communities**.

Photo: Days work done – until tomorrow!



THE WAGONETTE

Watsons had a stable in Albert Street, near Thesiger Street. They boasted a variety of conveyances; dog-carts, chaisers, landeaus, and a lovely wagonette. All the carriages were bright and shiny with harnesses "properly brassoed." Often on a cold winters Sunday morning I would be sent down there to order a cab for Grandma to go to St. Andrew's Church. She never missed a morning service and never begrudged the one shilling it cost her for the return trip. (and her weekly old age pension was five shillings).

I was very fond of the wagonette and had quite a few rides in it. It took me on many a Sunday School outing to Healing. This was the vehicle that Sol Hoskins used to hire every Saturday for his platform on the Market, where he sold herbs and various remedies for every ailment man was heir to.

I remember one occurrence involving the wagonette which was quite frightening. It took place on the market at the time of the Suffragette campaign and had been hired by the campaigners. Two suffragettes were in it, facing a very angry crowd of men. One Suffragette was trying to make a speech, but her voice was drowned out by the derisory shouts of the unbelievers.

In a short while some started to push on the side of the vehicle, and, as the ladies hastily jumped out, over it went, two wheels spinning round. I felt sorry for the fleeing ladies, but to see the wagonette on its side really upset me.

Election times in those days always brought a load of street fighting, not always among the boys. To wear your candidate's "favour" was asking for trouble. My father, who was a Radical, always went to the poll in his Sunday suit. If there was no Radical candidate he voted Liberal. On one occasion there was a General Election, and, as it was more important than Council Elections, father bought himself a new bowler hat.

Alas, as he was entering the voting booth some of the Labour supporters mistook Dad, in his best clothes, as one of the "upper class," and bashed his new bowler hat over his eyes.

After that, the Conservative George Doughty got his vote!

Another of my memories of Freeman Street was seeing the torch-light procession of Sir George Doughty, MP for Grimsby. I think it was on his return from Australia.

He had arrived at Town Station to be greeted by a large crowd of supporters. They unhitched the horse from the carriage and pulled him down Freeman Street, singing and shouting. Torch bearers walked each side of his coach.

Sir George was waving to everybody and we all waved back... It was an impressive sight. I followed the procession to the Royal Hotel.

But HE didn't give us a currant bun!

St Andrew’s Church - A thousand worshippers, a proud community, and one grandmother’s devotion

Consecrated in 1870, the **church** rose proudly in the heart of **Grimsby’s booming dockside community**, with space for more than **a thousand worshippers**. Yet its **foundations**, laid on **unstable marshland**, proved its **undoing**: **cracks and defects** plagued the building for **decades** until, at last, it was **declared unsafe** and **demolished in 1961–62**.

For **John’s grandmother**, however, the **church** was worth every **sacrifice** — she devoted **a fifth of her weekly pension** to pay for a **cab fare**, just to be present at the **Sunday morning service**.

Photo: At the busy junction of Freeman Street and Church Street stood St Andrew’s Church — its 125-foot tower and pealing bells a constant presence in the life of the East Marsh.

Grimsby's Self-Made Giant: Sir George Doughty

Sir George Doughty was one of Grimsby's most famous and influential figures, a true self-made man whose life mirrored the town's booming success.

Born in Grimsby, Doughty began his working life humbly as a **carpenter**. He then leveraged his ambition and sharp business sense to become a formidable **trawler-owner and property developer**, amassing significant wealth during the fishing industry's peak.

His political career was equally dominant; he served as the town's **Member of Parliament for almost two decades**. Yet, Doughty's influence extended far beyond politics and commerce. He was known for his tireless **philanthropic work**, earning him the high honour of being made an **Honorary Freeman of the Borough in 1889**. His good works included:

- Leading efforts to successfully **eradicate a smallpox epidemic** in Grimsby in 1888.
- Serving the community as a **travelling preacher** and involvement in the **temperance movement**.
- Hosting charitable events for the **town's orphans** with his wife.

When Sir George Doughty died in 1914, the entire town mourned the loss of their champion. His popularity was evident in the enormous public turnout for his funeral, which became a significant civic event. It was famously noted that **"So many wreaths were placed that during his procession several vehicles were needed to carry them all."**

Sir George Doughty, MP (1895), Mayor of Grimsby (1892–1893)

Thomas Benjamin Kennington (1856–1916)

Grimsby Town Hall

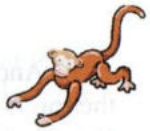
Painted by Grimsby artist Thomas Kennington.

(Credit: https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/sir-george-doughty-mp-1895-mayor-of-grimsby-18921893-80653/search/2025--actor:kennington-thomas-benjamin-18561916/page/1/view_as/grid)

THE MENAGERIE COMES TO TOWN

There were bill stuck all over the town. Everybody must have known that BOSTOCK and WOMBELLS MENAGERIE was coming to Freeman Street market. Half the market had been marked off, and already a wagonette with streamers and balloons and a very noisy band had been parading the streets, announcing the imminent arrival of the menagerie.

It was to be here for three days, as the market had to be cleared by Saturday for its usual function. At long last it appeared, a huge canvas circus tent covering all the animal cages which were set out in a large square. I was having some difficulty persuading somebody to take me, but at last Grandma said she would if I behaved myself all next day. This boy angel was finally rewarded when we set off for the market.



At the entrance to the tent was a man with a monkey on his shoulder and a parrot on his head. Grandma paid our entrance money and we went into another world, full of people and a heavy scent of animals. The cages seemed far too small for the lions and tigers, and the two large bears could not even stand up in their cage. As young as I was I felt sorry for them, but there was a glamour about it. A camel was walking round giving rides.

In the centre of the area was an open brazier glowing with red hot coke. This was for heating a six foot long run, and in front of it were two cages of lions. As we crowded round, the doors of the cages were swung open and joined to make one big one. A lady stepped inside holding a whip and a long pointed rod. Attendants stood nearby holding red hot iron rods (in case the lions attacked!).

The animals performed a few tricks, and then came the highlight of the act – the trainer was going to place her head in the lion's mouth. The lion was made to put two front paws on a stool and open its mouth very wide. The lady then put her nose inside, and that was it. More than any of us dare do, though the animals seemed very docile, almost bored.

Grandma was getting tired of walking round the many cages. There was one exhibit I hadn't seen at the end of the tent, with a giant of a man standing at the doorway. I asked grandma if we could go in, so she started laughing and took me through the doorway – past the giant man who was holding a notice saying "TO THE AUSGANG." And there we were, back in the market place!

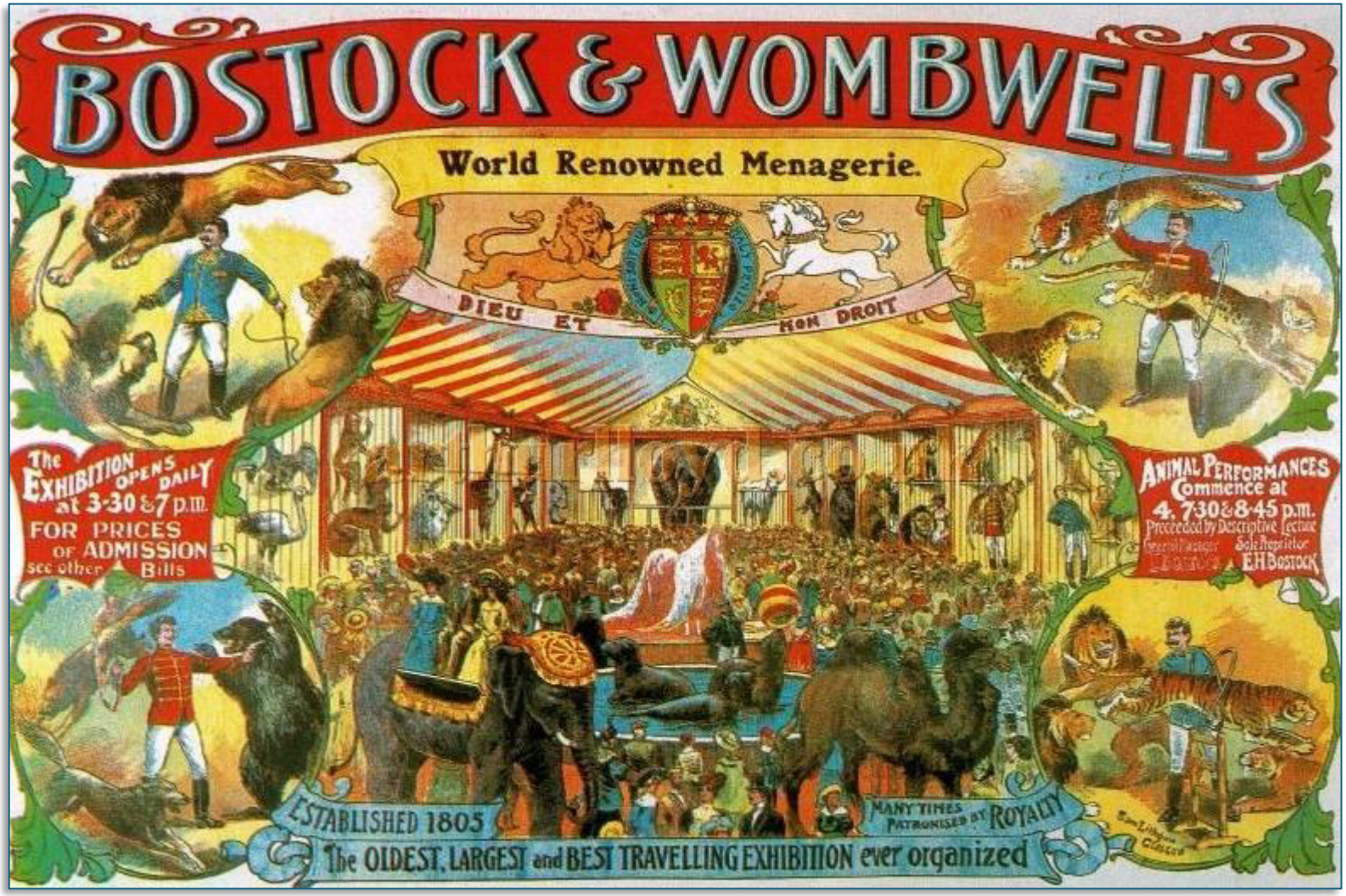

BOSTOCK & WOMBWELL'S
World Renowned Menagerie.
DIEU ET MON DROIT
The EXHIBITION OPENS DAILY at 3-30 & 7 p.m.
FOR PRICES OF ADMISSION see other Bills
ANIMAL PERFORMANCES Commence at 4, 7-30 & 8-45 p.m.
Proceeded by Descriptive Lecture
Sole Proprietor E.H.BOSTOCK
ESTABLISHED 1805
MANY TIMES PATRONISED BY ROYALTY
The OLDEST, LARGEST and BEST TRAVELLING EXHIBITION ever organized

Photo: C.1900 Three Days of Wonder - at Freeman Street Market

(*Credit: Library of congress / https://jvc.oup.com/2020/11/26/e-h-bostock)*

FURTHER AFIELD

It was the start of the summer holidays when Uncle Arthur asked me if I would like to go with him for a weeks fishing. Uncle Arthur was a skipper. I jumped at the chance, and my mother and father also liked the idea – no doubt looking forward to a peaceful week.

When the big day arrived Uncle Arthur took me to an office to "sign on" as a spare hand. That made me feel very important, even though it was an unpaid position. We made our way to uncle's trawler, where I was introduced to the crew as "my nevvy." Nobody took any notice of me as they were busy getting ready for sea. Through the lock gates we went as several women said goodbye, and one threw an orange to me. Then one of the crew called Paddy asked me if I had any pins or safety pins, but I knew it was unlucky to have a pin on Uncle's ship.

After we had been steaming for a while Uncle took me to the bridge and that was great. I could see all the activity happening on deck, and even held the wheel for a while. Then a message came for me – cook would like to see me in the galley. I had visions of an offering of cake or some treat, but was given a large bucket of potatoes and a peeler. This became my daily task. It wasn't too bad, because cook fed me currant slab cake and lemonade.

Cook made some smashing roly poly and his plum duff was out of this world. Or was it the sea air gave me such a good appetite? Unsurprisingly, the main course was usually fish.

Sunday was a quieter day than others. Fishing went on as usual, but there was very little swearing. Uncle had warned me to take no notice of it, and not to tell Aunt Rose. In a lull between hauling in, Paddy produced a concertina and started playing "Rock of Ages." All the crew who were on deck joined in, and I was very moved by their sincerity.

It was thrilling to watch the haul being pulled in, and when the net was opened on deck all the hands got to work sorting the squirming, wriggling fish. They threw the tiny ones back, but many of these were caught by thousands of screaming gulls, wheeling round the ship until the catch was stowed away. I marvelled at the skill of the crew and their disregard for danger as they slid around on the tossing deck. They certainly earned the few shillings they got for it all. I could see that Uncle was king of the castle on the bridge, shouting out orders with blasphemous encouragement. He and the crew seemed like a big family.

I never saw the engine room though I would have liked to do so, but I did sometimes see a hot and dirty face peeping out of the depths.

The days passed quickly, and we never saw another boat until we got to the Humber mouth again. Uncle was well pleased with his catch. One haul had brought in a lot of prawns and these were shared out among the crew. When we landed the crew shook my hand and Paddy gave me an Irish coin for luck.

I lost it on the way home!

Addendum to the above "Further Afield":

Going down the **river** was very **pleasant**, and I had new **views of Cleethorpes and Spurn**. As the **ship entered the open sea** it began to **rock and roll**, and **Paddy** put his arm round my shoulder and said, *"If you feel seasick hang over the rail on that side or the wind will blow it back in your face."* However, I wasn't **sick** and never have been, even though I have had some very **rough passages** since.

We had been **steaming for about an hour** when I wanted to go to the **toilet**. I asked **Paddy** where it was, and he pointed to a **barrel right at the stern**. *"That is what we use,"* he said. *"But be very careful, the barrel is half-full of water to keep it steady."* As I **sat on the edge**, **exposing myself to the elements**, the **ship started to roll**, and I could feel the **barrel move**. I tried to **grip the deck rail** and was **scared stiff** of **falling in the barrel** or **going over the side**. That was the only time I've **prayed whilst using a toilet!**

After that, I became **constipated** until the **cook** gave me some **evil-tasting stuff**, and then the **agony** started all over again. That **barrel** was the only thing about the **trip** I did not like.

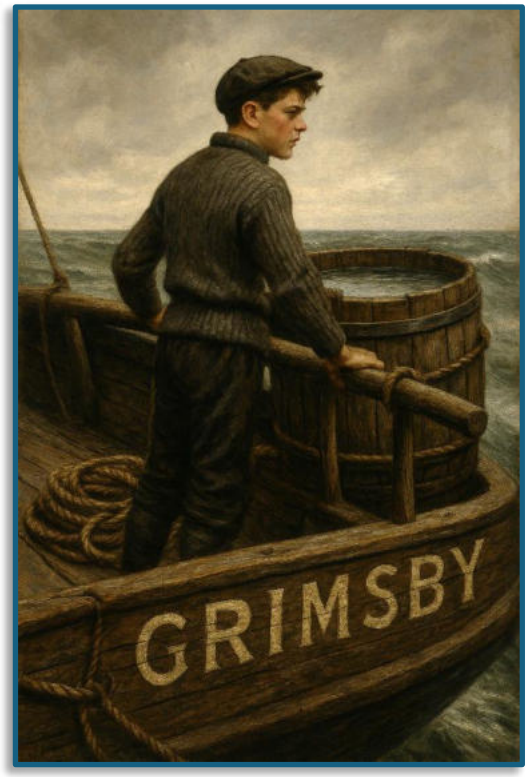
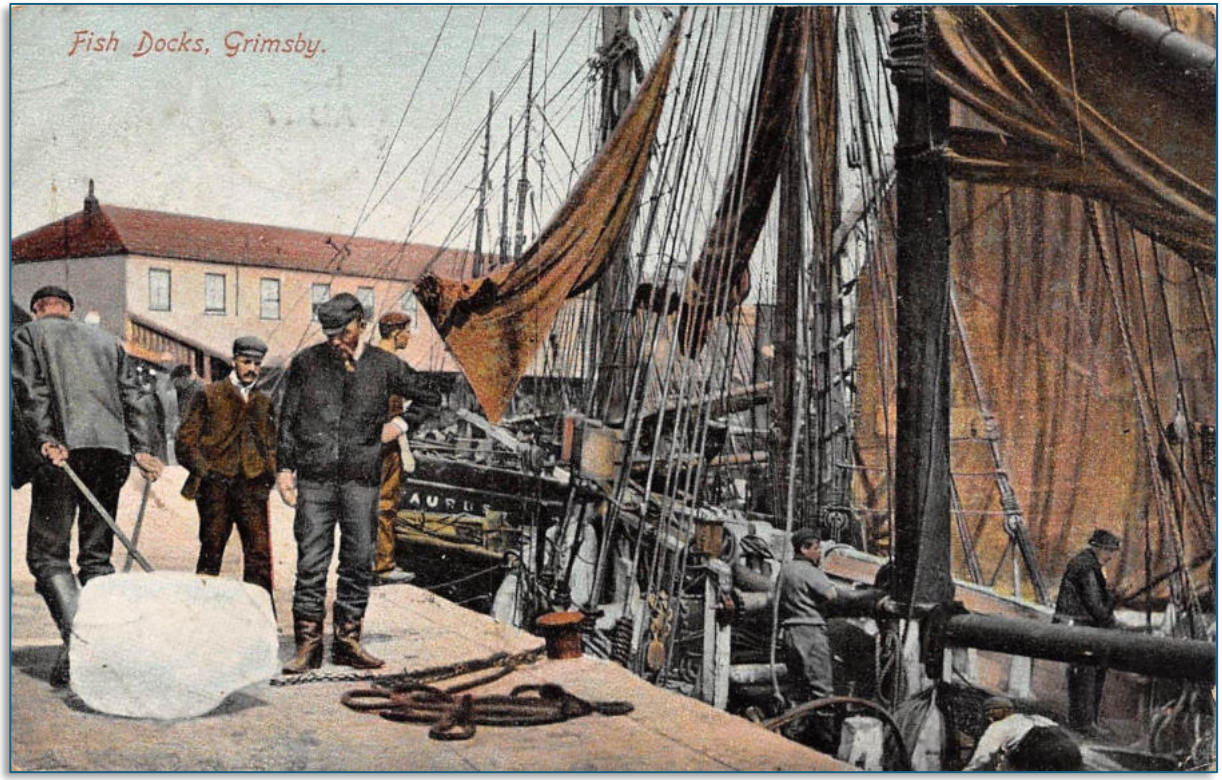


Photo: Precarious Prayers at the Stern

Photo: Salt in the Veins: Grimsby's Men of the Sea

Photo: From Dock to Deep: The Lives that Fed a Nation



THE CHRISTMAS DUCK

It was springtime when my Father brought home a lovely little duckling. The First World War was beginning to affect the housewife's pantry, and Father had decided we should be sure of a Christmas dinner. The dear sweet duckling was to be fattened up for the occasion.

The bird instantly became one of the family and it was provided with a warm straw-lined box in the scullery. Mother let it out every morning to waddle round our small garden, and we filled the old wash tub with water for its swimming pool. Of course it had to have a name, so sister said "lets call it Quackie." So Quackie it was.

By the time summer came Quackie was becoming fatter and friendlier. You only had to stand at the back door and shout his name and along he would come, quack- quack, waddle- waddle, seemingly propelled by a vigorously shaking back end. He would stand there while you rubbed his head and take a piece of bread out of your fingers as gently as a baby.

Summer disappeared into the limbo of time, and Autumn began to take charge of the year. Cold winds, rain and fog meant Quackie had to have a kennel, so Father made a garden home, but we still brought our pet—for such he had become-- into the house at night. The house box soon had to be replaced by a larger one, for Quackie was filling out in all the right places.

Alas the time came for November to be torn off the calendar. We all began to feel a sense of foreboding. December is the Christmas month and Quackie's life was running to a close.

The War was still dragging on, and meat rations were cut to a minimum. Father said we must carry out our original plan and Quackie would have to decorate the table, not the garden.

I have never dreaded the approach of any day as much as the coming Christmas Eve. Visits to dentists, school exams, doctors all seemed as nothing to the sinking feeling that flooded me now.

The "MERRY XMAS TO ALL"
over the mantle-piece was a mockery.

Even Father seemed uncertain now the day of decision had dawned, and though quite capable of administering the coup-de-grace to our Quackie, he had to bring in a neighbour for the fatal deed. I just couldn't stand it and had to go out while Quackie was still our lovely pet.

I was out a long time, and when I returned Mother was plucking a very dead duck, with tears streaming down her face and feathers being placed lovingly in a boot box. Quackie was no more and tomorrow we would feast on delicious roast duck. Or would we?

I don't know what torment Mother went through when she finally placed our Christmas dinner in the oven, but I do know how we all felt when it came out browned and sizzling—AWFUL! It was like attending a friend's cremation.

I could see Father was visibly affected, he didn't even lift the carving knife. "Take it away" he said in a thick voice, while we all sat round the table crying. Mother wrapped it in some greaseproof paper and went out. I don't know if she gave it away or buried it, but after a while she came back, red-eyed, and her and father kissed one another.

None of us felt hungry any more.

P.S. We had the Christmas pudding for tea!

FIRST CINEMA

The first place showing moving pictures in Grimsby was the **Kings Hall** (the site now occupied by the Grimsby Telegraph.) This hall was a building used for concerts, lectures etc. This was where the wonderful world of cinema opened for me.

I was about nine years old and the admission charge for children at a matinee was one penny. When a crowd of us young lads entered the hall, a man was already hanging black curtains at the windows. The projector was placed about halfway down the centre aisle. Then the operator began turning the handle of the machine, and thrown onto a large white sheet was a moving picture of a train entering a station.

It was really moving; certainly and surely, moving. At first we were very quiet, but after getting over the shock we made so much noise that someone shouted "Shut up." If the picture had had a sound track, we wouldn't have heard it!

The screen went white again, and I watched the spool being changed. After that, we saw about six short films, mostly street scenes.

Soon it was all over, and we went out into the daylight again, talking about that train. It not only entered a station, it entered all our lives, and brought a new dimension to them, though, of course, we didn't realize it at the time.

After seventy- two years the memory of that moving train is with me still.

CINEMAS IN GRIMSBY

My favourite cinema was the **Kings Hall** in Cleethorpe Road. When I was a lad, Grimsby had the **"Oxford"** cinema in Oxford St. This was a smallish building and the machine was also hand turned. Here I saw Chrissie White; Edwards; Arbukle; Sidney Drew and other stars. Another cinema was the **Strand** in Strand St. and the **Lyric** in Victoria St. both run by the same management. The Lyric was a small place and screened the same pictures that the larger Strand had shown the previous week. The admission ticket to the Lyric was a lot cheaper. The Strand had a very good orchestra; the Lyric only had a piano.

The Strand was the first with a kind of talking picture. It was the Christy Minstrels, and a synchronized gramophone provided the singing. I thought it was done very well. There was also a picture of a man walking along a street, stopping to shake hands with a man on the stage, and giving him a light for his cigar. The cigar, held close to the screen, suddenly began to smoulder and the man on the stage walked off smoking it. We were astounded. A singer or an instrumentalist filled the interval. The Strand was also a skating rink, and after the show the seats were pushed down the sides and skaters took to the floor. It was all in the admission charge.

The **Hippodrome** in Newmarket Street was another early cinema. This was known as the "flea-pit." It had a red-coated orchestra that always started the proceedings with The Lincolnshire Poacher. They had many stage shows including the famous (or infamous) Dr. Walton Bodie, Illusionist, Hypnotist and Quack. He claimed to have cured many cripples, and their crutches were hung outside the building to "prove it." He was a great showman and when he came, there were pictures for us lads.

The first picture I saw here was Dick Turpin's ride to York. It was a mixture of stage and screen. The jumping of turnstiles and the galloping to York was screened. Turpin and Black Bess came staggering onto the stage at the end, the horse collapsing and dying with Turpin weeping over it. We all joined in the weeping.

It was at the Hippodrome that I saw Pearl White in long serials and lots of "Indians and Cowboy" pictures. The great weeks were the showing of Charlie Chaplin pictures.

Another early recollection of the Hippodrome was seeing the funeral of King Edward the Seventh. While it was shown the audience all stood up.

The **Palace** in Victoria Street was another place that couldn't decide whether it should be a "Palace of Variety" or a cinema. They compromised by having the live turns first, and the picture last. It didn't work very well because the Cinematograph was fixed at the back of the pit, and many people — not wanting to see the picture, were getting up and casting their profiles on the screen.

One of the great shows put on at the **Palace** was called "Pools Panorama", and it was about the sinking of the **Titanic.** The stage was in darkness a pair of huge rollers held a painted picture of cloud and sea. Lit from behind the Titanic was seen sailing along as the rollers revolved, and a narrator told us all the technical details about the liner. Dance music seemed to come from the ship, and as night fell all the portholes showed lights.

Dimly we saw the iceberg approaching and there was a loud crunching noise. The band started playing a hymn, and we could see lifeboats being launched. Then the stricken ship began to go down; there were more crashing sounds; and that was the end. It all seemed so real and all the audience were shaken.

Years later the **Palace** became a proper cinema, though not a successful one. The **Tivoli** was another that went from Variety to pictures.

Memories—Rialto Tower Plaza Kinamacolour Rex Savoy Globe Queens Oxford Hippodrome Strand Lyric Gem Palace Tivoli.

Flickering Dreams: The Birth of Cinema in Grimsby

The Oxford Cinema - Films, Dances, and the Home Guard

A **cinema** first opened on **Oxford Street** in **1913** under the ownership of **Mr T. Wiseman**. By **1920** it had been re-named the **Oxford Picture House** (it is listed under that name in **Kelly's Directory of 1922**, but an entry in a **directory of 1923** describes it as the **Oxford Cinema**). The **Oxford** last **screened a film** in **June 1937**; the feature in question being **"The Bride Walks Out" with Barbara Stanwyck**.

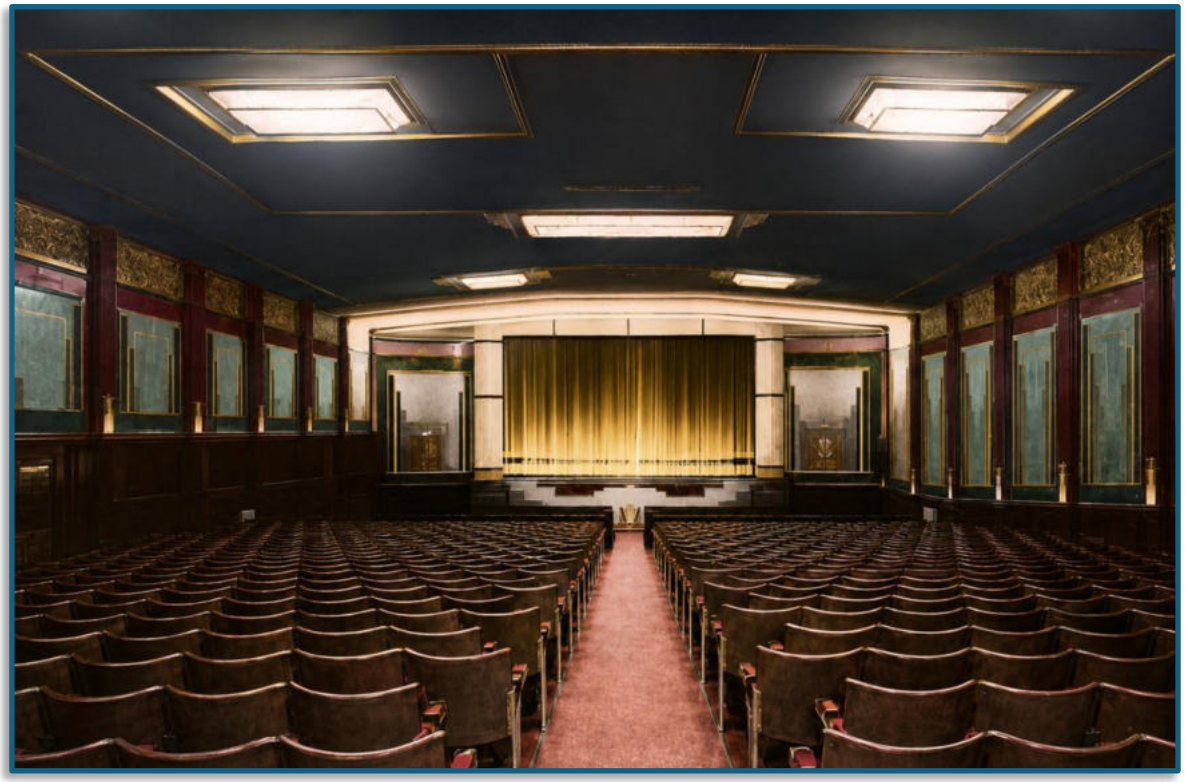
The building subsequently became a **dance hall** and was later used by **Associated Tyre Specialists** as a **tyre fitting workshop** for many years. It was **derelict by September 1978** when it was **damaged by fire** and finally **demolished around 1990**.

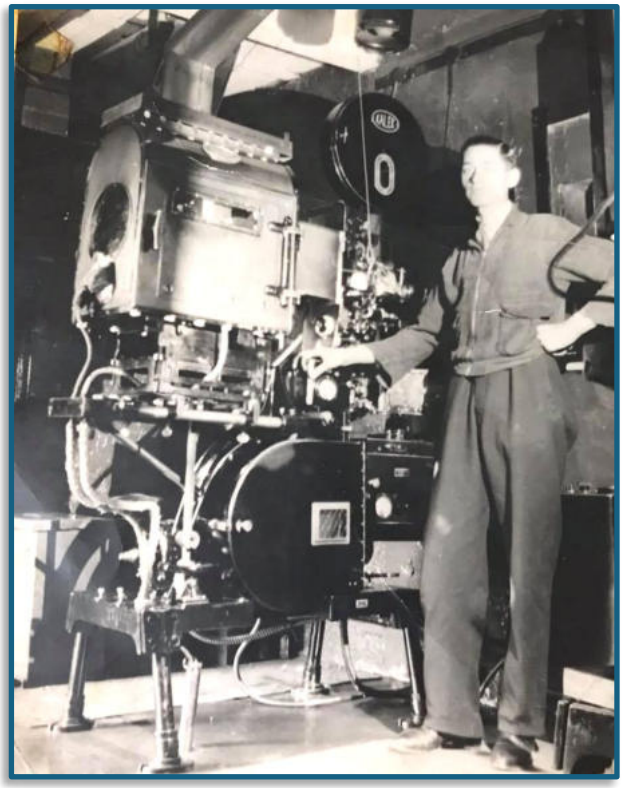
Trevor McDonald's father recalls that during **WWII American troops** were **billeted in nearby Park Street**. He seems to think that it was a **dance hall** at the time, which proved **popular with the Yanks**. It's believed that at some point in the war, it was used as a **base for a local Home Guard Unit**.

(Credit: Information first paragraph – Lincs Inspire Grimsby Local History Library)

Photo: Oxford Street's Window to the Movies (c.1970's)

The Strand Cinema De Luxe - From Silver Screen to Skating Scene





Photos: Arthur Blackburn - projectionist at the Strand Cinema De Luxe in 1940, poses beside the projector that brought Hollywood magic to Grimsby audiences

Some **contradictory information** surrounds the **Strand Cinema De Luxe**, so the following details may not be entirely accurate. The **cinema opened** on either **January 21, 1912**, or **May 15, 1911**, and originally **seated 2,200 people** on a **single floor**. Later that year, on **November 4**, a **full-page newspaper advertisement** announced the debut of the **Professional Strand Orchestra**, with **15 instrumentalists** billed as an **'enormous attraction.'**

In the **early 1930s**, a **Western Electric (WE) sound system** was installed, and in **April 1936**, the cinema's **seating was reduced to 1,331** when it was taken over by **ABC Cinemas**. The **ice-skating rink** that John remembers **closed during WWII** and was briefly used for **munitions work** until the building was **bombed** on **July 13, 1943**, or **June 1943**.

After the **bombing**, the cinema's **red seats** were **scattered widely** — a report mentions one was found in **Carole Ann Forward's grandparents' garden** on **Thorold Street**. **Holes in the floor** revealed **tram lines underneath**, a reminder of the building's **earlier life as a horse-drawn tram depot**. Thankfully, the **bomb struck after the cinema had closed** for the day. However, **John R. Wright** confirmed that his **grandfather, Bill Wright**, who was the **night watchman**, was sadly **killed in the raid**. John's **father**, serving **abroad in the army** at the time, likely believed his **father was safe in Grimsby**. The **shop opposite the cinema** was also **damaged in the attack**.

On https://cinematreasures.org/theaters/48210/comments - 'Cleeboy' recalls:

Cleeboy on November 9, 2020 at 3:42 am

"We lived close to the Strand. There were **three bombs** — the first fell in our **garden between Sidney and Sussex Street**, the next fell on the **Strand Cinema in Park Street**, the next on **dwellings and shops on Cleethorpe Road**.

I was **9 years old**, and we all got out of the **badly damaged house** where we had been **sheltering under the stairs**. Climbing over the wall I saw **glowing houses falling down in Sidney Street** and we went to a **friend in Sussex Street**. I **fell asleep on the floor**.

We had to **leave that house** because it was **badly damaged and unsafe**, but we were **lucky to be alive**. It was an **unforgettable night.**"

Photo: From silver screen to silent ruins — the Strand Cinema's bombed site on Park Street, with the Clee Park Hotel beyond. Empty ground until the 1960s flats rose in its place

The Hippodrome — fondly nicknamed “The Hippo”

Sometimes billed as the **Picturedrome** — once stood on **Railway Street** in **Grimsby**. Locals often called it the **“flea pit,”** a label it shared with other small neighbourhood cinemas such as the **Rialto**.

Believed to have been erected by **Victorian showman Matthew Dowse** in either **1895** or **1899**, the **corrugated iron-clad, prefabricated hall** with its **concrete frontage** first opened as the **Grand Circus** before taking the name **Hippodrome** in **1899**. By **1909**, it was offering **“bio tableaux”** — an early mix of **moving pictures** and **variety acts** that thrilled **East Marsh audiences**.

On the night of **24 August 1922**, after a programme featuring **The Lurking Peril, The Vital Spark,** and **The Knockout Adaptation**, the **cinema closed its doors** as usual. But before dawn, **fire swept through the building**, reducing it to **ruins**. Its **loss** was deeply felt across the **East Marsh**, where the **Hippo** had been a much-loved home of **affordable entertainment** for **working-class families**.

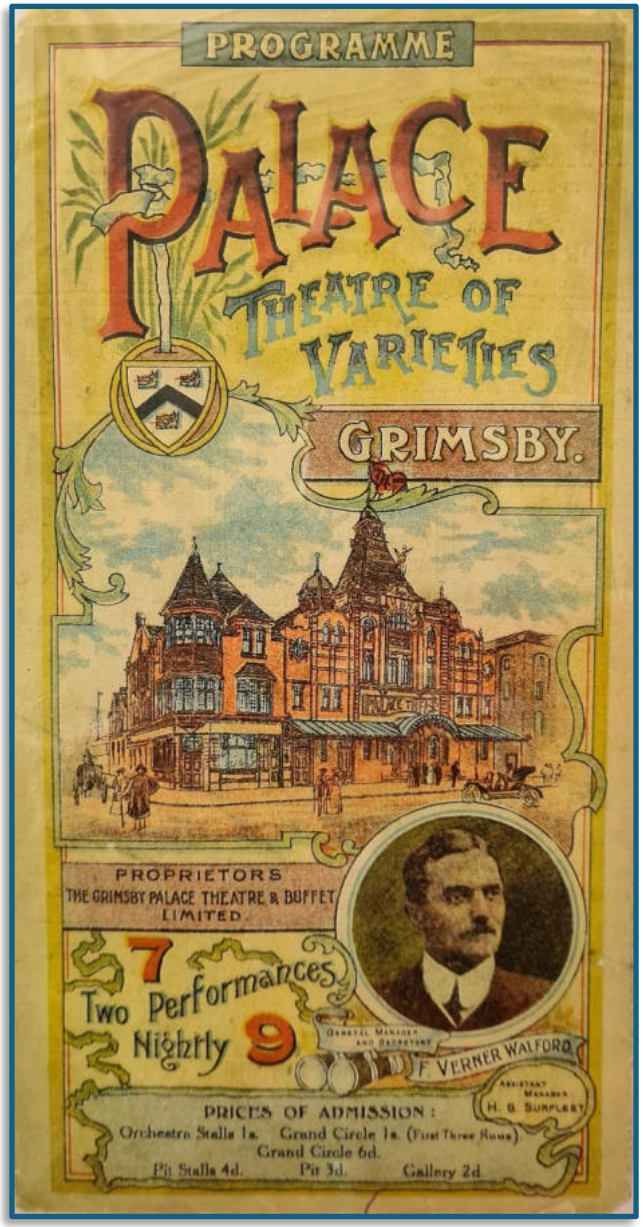
Photo: East Marsh's Palace of the People

Photo: The Hippo Remembered: From Crowds to Cinders

The Palace Theatre of Varieties –

From Edwardian Grandeur to Silent Ruin

Photo: That Week's Show — Tudor's Educated Ponies- Featuring Billy, the pony famed for cleverness and intelligence rarely seen in the ring



John's final memory of his local **cinemas** and **theatres** is the **Palace Theatre**, situated on **Victoria Street North**, opposite the site of today's **Dunelm store**.

The **Palace** was designed by **Owen & Ward of Birmingham** and **opened** to the public on **10 December 1904**. It was built on the site of the smaller and less opulent **Theatre Royal**. The **opening** was a **grand civic occasion**, attended by the **Mayor, Joseph Hewson**, and **Sir George Doughty MP**. The inaugural proceedings were organised by **Joseph Chapman**, former proprietor of the **Theatre Royal** and head of the company that built its replacement.

Commissioned by theatre impresario **H.J. Curry**, who also owned the **Prince of Wales Theatre** on **Freeman Street** and the **Tivoli Theatre** on **Duncombe Street**, the **Palace** was an **ambitious project**. It originally **seated 1,500 people**, later increased to **2,000** after a **refurbishment in 1908**. The theatre boasted **stalls, circle, gallery, four private boxes, and eight exits**, making it one of the **most modern venues** of its day.

In its first months, the **Palace** was operated by **Frank MacNaghten's Vaudeville Circuit**, before being taken over by **T. Allan Edwardes**, who had previously managed the **Hippodrome Theatre** on **Railway Street**. For the next **three decades**, it traded primarily as a **variety theatre**, with occasional **film screenings**. Many of the **great acts** of the day appeared there, including **Harry Lauder, Fred Karno, Laurel & Hardy, and Gracie Fields**, drawing audiences from across **Grimsby's East and West Marsh** and beyond.

In **1931**, the **Palace** was **refurbished** and **reopened** in **August** as a **cinema**, equipped with a **modern sound system** for the new era of **"talkies."** It continued as a **picture house** until **1943**, when the **Tivoli Theatre** was **bombed** during the **Second World War**. At that point, the **Palace** was taken over by **F. J. Butterworth** and returned once more to its roots as a **variety theatre**.

The **post-war years**, however, proved **difficult**. Like many theatres, the **Palace** struggled against the combined pressures of **cinema** and the growing popularity of **television**. **Audiences dwindled**, and the theatre finally **closed its doors** in **May 1955**.

After **closure**, the building was used as a **storehouse** for the **Humber Warehousing Company**, but by the **1970s** it had fallen into serious **disrepair**. The once-grand **Edwardian pleasure palace** was **demolished in 1979**.

One part of the complex, however, **survived**. The **Palace Buffet**, the theatre's former **bar**, continued in use until **2001** and, following a period of **vacancy**, in **2005 Palace Developments Ltd** sympathetically **adapted** it into a block of **retail premises** on the corner of

Freeport Wharf (Corporation Road) and **Victoria Street North**. In recognition of this **sensitive redevelopment**, they were awarded the **Grimsby and Cleethorpes Civic Society's Commercial Restoration Award** in **2007**.

(Credit: some of above information provided by Lincs Inspire Grimsby Local History Library and the Grimsby, Cleethorpes & District Civic Society.)

Photo: These decorative ceramic tiles, featuring a stylised classical motif, are typical of the Edwardian designs commonly used in public buildings. Fortunately, the developers, Palace Developments Ltd, preserved the tiles from removal, and they are now on display in the car park of the retail units.

Proudly positioned atop the **Palace Theatre** once stood a **classical statue** – a **rarity** in the **North East Lincolnshire** area. When the building was **demolished**, **Euterpe** was carefully **removed** and entrusted to the care of the **local authority**. The **statue still survives** and, although in a somewhat **damaged state**, it is hoped that she can be **restored** and, **121 years later**, once again stand proudly in either **Grimsby** or **Cleethorpes**.

The **demolition crew** took great care in **removing** this **classical statue**, ensuring her **survival** when the **Palace Theatre** was lost. For the past **forty-six years** she has remained **hidden away** and **neglected**. Now, perhaps, the time has come for her **restoration** and for her to be **proudly displayed once more**. The proposed **new development opposite Cleethorpes Pier** may provide the **ideal setting** for her **return**.

Photo: Euterpe with a group of admirers – can she be admired again?

JUST A MOMENT

Life is full of moments. There is a moment for nearly every situation.

When I was a lad you could collect a hatful of "moments." They were all mixed up and you picked them out as you wanted. There was a nice waiting moment—"Just a moment" and another well used "In a moment." Sometimes I have been asked "Have you a moment?"

I once knew a chap who never had a moment. Fancy never having the pleasure of happy moments!
Of course, some moments are sad, very sad, and these seem to last longer than the others.

A curious property possessed by "moments" is that by a little manipulation they can be stretched quite a way. "I'll only be a moment" my mother used to say, getting ready for an evening out with father. Then dad knew he had plenty of time for a shave.

Oh yes. There are all sorts of moments. There is one that is linked with the word "first." This is a rather cherished one. It is when you have passed your first exam, won your first race, or when a mother holds her new born baby. It's called "a precious moment," and it leaves an imprint on your mind for ever.

No matter how much you dipped in that "moment" hat, it never seemed to empty. Yet there does come a time eventually when you reach the bottom, and then all that remains are a few "final moments."

You take them in your hand, hold them a little while, and give them to God.

John Lyon
1981

The income from the sales of this booklet is only intended to off set the printing and production costs.

Any money above this amount will be donated to a charity which was close to John Lyon's heart. The **RNLI**

John always printed his own stories as "Cuckoo Press"!

This edition is kindly printed by
Press 2010

~~ End of publication ~~

Memories of the "Click-Em" Inn (The Talbot)

In 1916 at the age of 15 I took a job at the Click-Em Inn as a furnace boy. The inn is situated on the Grimsby to Binbrook road being the only drinking house after leaving Waltham and a very welcome stop for horses and travelers on their way to Binbrook or Market Rasen. I earned many a copper taking a bucket of water for a gasping horse while the driver sat enjoying the hospitality of the inn.

I was told the name CLICK-EM inn was derived from the actions of the landlord, Mr Mumby who would stand at the inn door and would entice travelers Binbrook bound to come in, by much hand waving and beckoning. He would Click em in! Mr Mumby was a large, stout gentleman and supported his weight on a long stick – almost like a shepherds crook. I never saw him do any work but he certainly did a lot of drinking. When a wagonette arrived he would lead them into the snug and join them at a table while Mrs Mumby served the drinks.

The beer was kept in a very cool cellar and under the barrels was an old fashioned low wooden wash tub. The beer tap was turned on and the tub would fill up so all I had to do was dip a jug into the tub and away upstairs to the bar with it. Everybody used to say what grand stuff it was but it was only Hewitt's delivered from Grimsby. Before my time it used to be made on the premises but the old brew house was now a store for cattle food and hay.

Mr Mumby's favourite tipple was gin and he had a huge repertoire of yarns which seemed to earn him lots of drinks. So much so that at closing time he couldn't move and had to be helped to bed up a very narrow flight of stairs. One of us behind him and one in front pulling.

Mrs Mumby was a small thin very wiry woman who made her own bread in the oven which went across the full width of the fireplace, something like a baker's oven. She was a marvelous cook and the meal portions were greater that I – a growing lad could tackle. Miss Mumby was the one who ran the farm and gave the orders. When Gert came around you had to look as if you was working or else you got a taste of her tongue.

The farm had 3 milking cows-several pigs, 2 strong farm horses and a pony plus chickens, ducks and guinea fowls. We also had a peacock.

The postman called every morning both delivering and collecting letters. He also collected the pea hen eggs and sold stamps.. The policeman who cycled up from Binbrook only came very occasionally and always enjoyed a glass of ale – closing time or not. They only had a six day license but a drink could be had any time at the back door.

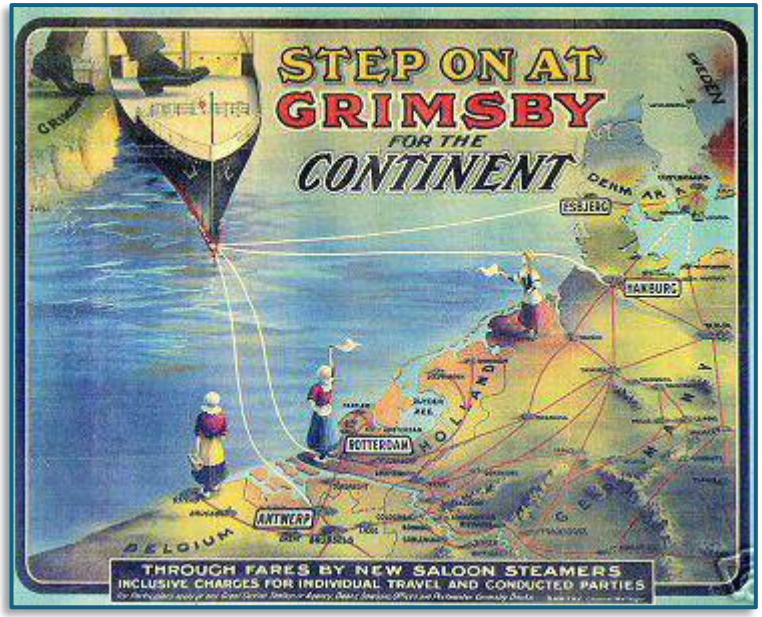
My wages were 2/6 a week all found. I shared a bed with the farm labourer called Harry. He was very strong and could do anything around a farm- being especially good with horses. We never had a visit from a vet for Harry did all the animal doctoring ever

This addendum presents John's additional notes, offering further detail beyond the original booklet

needed. There was another helper called Tom who was really a vagrant. He was small and tough and a bit smelly and quite a character. He never dined in the farm house preferring to take his meals in the barn. He slept in the loft of the barn and once I crept up ladder to look at his bedroom which was entered through a trap door. The first thing that I saw when my head emerged through the opening was a rat trap ready set and about six inches from my nose! There was a camp type bed with straw for a blanket and another rat trap at the side of it. The farm of course had its share of rats and I asked old Tom next day if they bothered him. "Not a bit", he said, "but if one of those traps goes off the squeal wakes me up!"

Photo: The Click'em Inn - A rustic outpost of Lincolnshire life, seen through the labour of a young furnace boy.

Grimsby – A Rapid and Luxurious Route to the Continent



Photos: From Grimsby – Gateway to Europe - Great Central Railway ships carried passengers, cargo — and even travelling bands — across the North Sea

Around 1908, the Great Central Railway's Grimsby steamship service carried passengers and cargo across the North Sea, with **Hamburg** as the key German port of call, alongside routes to **Rotterdam** and **Antwerp.**

Sometimes We Had Real Music from a Travelling German Band - Bandsmen, Onion Sellers, and Even a Dancing Bear

They came from the **Railway company's ships** and **Grimsby** was the start of their **countrywide tour**. Many **bands** only had **three or four players**, others were large enough to have a **conductor** who doubled as a **collector** – rattling his box while leading the band. We used to get many down **Albert Street**, and we really **loved them**. They made our street one of their **first calls** on the way from the **docks**. It was of course a real **shopping street** in those days, and the **sound of the music** and **colourful uniforms** made everybody happy. That is everyone but the **bandsmen**, for they never seemed the **fat jolly sort of Germans** we had in our picture books, but rather **thin and tired looking**. We used to **follow them**.

A few doors from my **father's shop** in **Albert Street** was an **empty shop** with the **windows blacked over**. The **floor was covered in straw** and was the **renting place** for **travellers** and **street performers**. The **German band** would use this place for their **first night's doss**. I suppose it was very **cheap to hire**. It also gave shelter to a little **Italian man** and his **performing bear** who slept on it before travelling to the next town — the two **sleeping together on the straw**. I would think the straw would have got **changed sometimes**, surely. The **onion boy sellers** also used this shop in the season after going round the town with their **strings of onions** draped around an **overloaded bike**. It had many other **tenants**. We used to **peep through the letterbox** but could never see what was going on inside. Though sometimes, if you happened to be near when the **door was opened**, you got a quick glance of a rather **dark interior** and a **smell that wasn't very nice**.

The **performing bear** was quite a **thrill** but also **frightening**. It had **dirty brown fur** and **fearful teeth** and wore a **collar** round its neck, and the **trainer** always kept hold of a **chain** attached to it. When the **keeper jangled the chain**, the **bear stood up** and **danced a jig**, **rolled over**, **pretended to be dead**, and **opened its mouth** in a **fierce fashion**, emitting a most **frightening sound**. I was only about **nine** and it **scared me to death**. I only saw it once, from the safety of my **father's boot shop doorway**. When the **bear stood up** it was much **taller than the Italian** and could have **eaten him in one go**. I think it must have been the **last of the travelling bears**.

A New Way of Life Around the Corner - The motor car arrives with more noise than any horse-drawn cart

I was born in a most **exciting period of industrial history**. The world had just slipped out of the **nineteenth century** and though there were still more **horses on the road** than the **newfangled motor car**, there was every sign that a **new way of life** was just round the corner.

My first **memory of a motor car** is of the **noise** it made. It was coming down **Albert Street** with a far greater **clatter** than any of the **horse-drawn vehicles**, **smoke** emitting from the rear and a great **blaring of the horn** from the front. I think I was too **frightened** to race after it. I suppose I was only about **six**.

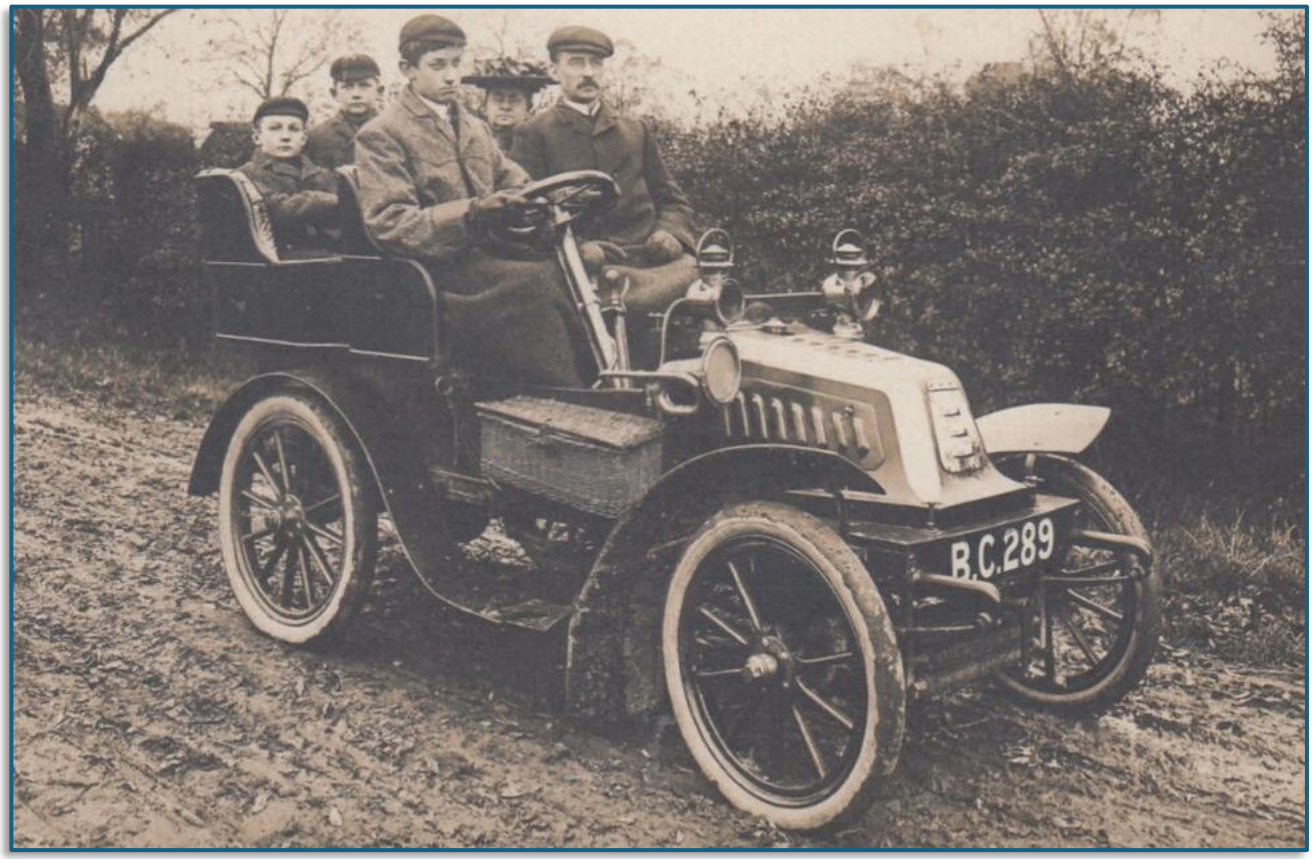


Photo: A 16-year-old motorist makes his way down a mud-churned road in Grimsby.

ST. ANDREW'S HALL
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Special Engagement of the
ROYALS
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Tickets may be obtained from Rev. C. G. BARTON, St. Andrew's Vicarage. Mr. G. PARTINGTON, 330, Victoria Street.
Mr. C. LYON, 62, Guildford Street.
A. WINDLE & Co., Ltd., Printers, 303, Victoria Street, Grimsby.

Chas Lyon: From Playgoer to Promoter

John's early trips to the local **theatres** and **cinemas** may well have sparked the **passion for drama** that stayed with him throughout his life.

These two surviving **posters** hint that he later **promoted shows** himself, perhaps on a **semi-professional basis**. Were these productions staged **locally**, or did they reach audiences **further afield**?

Intriguingly, the **poster** on the right was printed by **Richardson's of Grimsby** — the very firm where John had once **worked** as a boy of just **fourteen**.

(Credit: both posters digitally restored by Paul Fenwick)